1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

work she was assisted by her daughter, her mother's sister, and the latter's daughter. Her husband also helped her a little more than usual. Both were very anxious, after all the past mishaps, that the coming child should live.

During this period the pregnant woman has no sexual intercourse, either with her husband or anyone else. Her husband, however, is permitted to have sexual relations with other women. Other pregnancy taboos affect the husband and not the wife. No man with a pregnant wife can fish or hunt wild pig. If he does, it is thought that he will have no success. Merely accepting food from any pregnant woman is considered inimical to fishing. In the magic connected with shark-fishing there is a spell designed to rid the man of the evil effects of having eaten with such a woman. One day a man, Tukan, returned from an unsuccessful hunt for wild pig, and he blamed his failure on the fact that there were so many women in the beginning of their pregnancy in the village. He said that they had eaten pig, and that this had weakened the dog's powers—how, he could not explain. Tukan made a magical spell over his dog to counteract this bad effect, and was confident that the next time he would have better luck when he went pig-hunting.

When the woman feels that the child is due she bathes in the sea to cleanse herself. The husband leaves the house and goes to sleep in the men's house, and she goes to her mother's house. Occasionally her mother will come to her house. If the mother is dead, the mother's sister (whose kinship term is mother) takes her place. A few women of the hamlet, usually kin to the pregnant woman and who have had children, assist, and sometimes one woman more skilled than the others takes the lead in helping deliver the child.

The parturient woman sits on the ground. Another woman sits at her back and supports her by clasping her waist with

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

both arms. A second woman sits in front, holding the legs wide open, and catches the child as it comes out. If the head does not come first some woman known for her skill will insert two fingers or the whole hand in the vulva and assist the delivery of the child with the fingers. Both of these women are usually of the opposite moiety from the parturient woman. Her mother, although present, is never one of them. The natives give as a reason that the mother is ashamed to look at her daughter's sexual organs. Sometimes, while the birth is taking place, one woman will massage the stomach of the parturient woman and recite a spell as she does so. All these women who have been of assistance at the birth will later be paid for their services. At the birth of the infant Murri in the village of Ambwa, the mother, Luga, was supported by a woman of her moiety, and wife of the infant's father's classificatory brother. In front, assisting the deliverance of the child was a woman of the opposite moiety and classificatory sister of the infant's father.

After the child is born, the mother bathes in the sea, rubbing her abdomen with a downward motion to get rid of the after-birth. She comes back, feeds the child, and then lies down in the house on the bamboo bed with her infant. Should the mother's breasts not be sufficiently developed, another woman will suckle the infant. She is selected merely for the fullness of her breasts, and with no regard to her relationship to the child or its mother. The mother remains in the house with the child for about a week.

The umbilical cord, *bitung*, is saved by the mother and put in a basket along with some *tsera* (currency). It is kept in this manner until adult life, when it is sometimes thrown away.

A few hours after the birth the baby is held over a fire made of dry grass and coconut shells, and water is poured over him. Both the smoke of the fire and the water are supposed to make the infant strong. The infant's mother's

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

sister officiated at one of these rites which I witnessed. 844
Later, on the same day, there is again the playful fighting between the women of opposite moieties. At the birth of the infant Murri in Ambwa the Eagle women of that village came to Lesu, three miles away, to indulge in this playful fighting with the wife of the new mother's brother, i.e. her sister-in-law. Also Hawk women from the more distant village of Libba came to Ambwa to fight playfully with the Eagle women there.

During the first day of his life the infant will become 844
betrothed. If the newly-born infant is a girl, the mother of 584
some boy of the opposite moiety will come up and "mark" the infant as the future wife of her son. No ritual is concerned with the "marking," the native name for which is *disirani*. The prospective mother-in-law merely announces the betrothal, and later brings a piece of baked taro, which she has chewed first, and gives it to the infant. If the newly-born infant is a boy, the father of some girl will "mark" him as the future husband of his daughter. The infant betrothal of female infants seems to be more common than it is for male infants, and Murri was not betrothed. The parents of the infant never object. As a matter of fact, the infant's father usually knows nothing about it until after it is over, as he is not present in the house just after the birth. When he does come in his wife tells him who has "marked" the child. As will be seen later, quite frequently this infant betrothal is not consummated in marriage, and both parties take other mates.

On the day of the birth, or on the following day, should 844
the baby have been born late in the day, a distribution of 851
coconuts and taro takes place. At the birth of the infant Murri this feast was held the day after his birth. A large group of women from Ambwa and Lesu were assembled for the feast. The Lesu women walked to Ambwa, and as they neared the village, moving in single file on the narrow

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

844 851 footpath through the bush leading from the road to the beach, and led by Maerabit, they yelled loudly, announcing their approach. As soon as they arrived, they filed into the house where the new baby was lying. In many little ways they showed their affection and joy in the new child, patting him and "crowing" over him. The infant's mother was not with him, but was in the cook-house preparing taro, and her mother was with the baby.

844 851 431 The women filed out of the house, and in their usual nonchalant manner sat on the ground waiting for the distribution of food. Murri, the infant's mother's brother, was master of ceremonies, and stood by the pile of coconuts and made a short speech, saying that these coconuts and taro were for the new infant, that this was only a small distribution of food, but that later they would have a much bigger feast. He was then assisted by the matrilineal grandfather of the infant in the distribution of the food to the women, who had all brought coconuts to the feast, and thus contributed as well as received them. First, each woman was given four coconuts, which was regarded as a new gift, then she received a large pile which was considered as a return gift for those she contributed. Each woman fills her [482] basket with the taro and coconuts. They all walk home together, with the baskets on their backs.[1]

844 Women of the opposite moiety have celebrated the arrival of a new member to the community by playfully fighting each other for months before he arrived and on the day of his birth. He was ushered into the world in feminine company; his grandmother and other women of his hamlet were

[257] [1] Usually, at this feast, some of the taro has been prepared in a special way months in advance. The inside is scooped out and it is baked and hung up on the ceiling of the house to dry for many months. The resulting taro is hard and brittle, quite different from the ordinary baked taro and is considered a delicacy. The few who know this method usually begin preparations as soon as they hear of a pregnancy, and long before the actual birth.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

there. His father was not present. His matrilineal uncle has given the initial feast for him. The women of his own and neighbouring villages have all seen him, patted him, and rejoiced in his arrival. But all these are only the beginning of the rites for the newborn child. The next month is a busy one. Another feast must be held, and medicine and magic must be made to give him strength.

The mother divides her time between nursing him and tending her garden. The first week or two after birth the mother stays home with her child, lying most of the time in the dark house on the bamboo bed with the infant and nursing him whenever necessary. Two or three days after birth she feeds him a piece of baked taro which she has first chewed, and small quantities of this form part of the infant's diet from now on. The baby is not suckled at any regular time, but is given his mother's breast whenever he cries, or the mother thinks he is hungry. During these first few weeks of the infant's life his mother's work in the garden is done by her mother and mother's sister if they are not too old, or a grown-up daughter if she has one, or some other female clan relative. Babies may be born, live, or die, but work in the gardens must go on all the time.

After two weeks the mother of the infant resumes her work in the garden, nursing the child before she goes and immediately upon her return. She will often return earlier than the other women in order to nurse her child. The infant's maternal grandmother stays at home to look after him. When Lagina became pregnant all the women expressed sorrow because her mother was dead. Who would look after her child while she was working in the garden? They expressed this sorrow in the *Grimisi* dance, performed during the first pregnancy rites, by placing their hands on the head of the woman next to them. I was told later that Lagina's sister, Mana, recently divorced, who was living with Lagina, would look after the child. If the mother should be far away

4: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

of leaves were obtained, but the writer has not yet had the opportunity of having them identified. Sterile women seriously attribute their sterility to the use of these leaves, and natives swear by their efficacy. But so do they also swear by their ability to make it rain by magic.[6]

Women usually work in their gardens right up to the time of giving birth to the child. Occasionally they may slacken their labor a bit a month or so before the time of birth, but this is not the rule. They resume their work usually about two weeks after birth. The long period of lactation has already been mentioned. In addition to the mother's milk, the infant is fed on baked taro within a day or two after birth. The mother chews it first and then gives it to the infant. There are other practices and customs which indirectly have a bearing on the vital statistics, but in this paper only the obvious ones can be indicated.

Household Census

Before presenting the statistics, a household census for one village (Lesu) is given. The household corresponds roughly to the individual family and its usual occupants are husband and wife, female unmarried children and young male children. Should a man have two wives, each one will usually have her own home, but sometimes they share the same house, particularly if there is much discrepancy in their ages. Should a woman have two husbands, one of them will usually count the men's house as his home. The unmarried men and boys of from approximately ten years sleep in the men's house. But this does not prevent the young boys from eating with their family and being a part of the household as far as sharing its duties and pleasures. Married men, for various reasons, occasionally sleep in the men's house. The girls sleep at home until they are married, and there is no women's house corresponding to the men's house. An older relative (widow or widower), too feeble to live alone, may also be an occupant of the household.

The village of Lesu contained 66 households. There were 62 adult males and 63 adult females (all married), and 65 male children and 42 female children. Nine of the adult males and two of the females were

[6] Dr. Hrdlička investigated certain objects which Indians believed would cause artificial sterility. He found them ineffectual. Hrdlička, A., Physiological and Medical Observations among the Indians of Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 34, p. 165.